

How Society Should Be Organized
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My society would ('should') be organized around justice and fairness for all (justice as fairness, as John Rawls phrased it), affordable education, citizen participation in decision making, a society in which a sense of community would be balanced with a right to privacy, and one in which citizens would be ecologically sophisticated enough to realize they are on a planet in space (a risky situation indeed), which (hopefully) would remind them to keep the place picked up.

I know, pie in the sky, right? Everyone knows justice is commonly meted out unfairly ("Them who has, gets," as my father-in-law liked to say), that education has evolved into a for-profit enterprise even among the nonprofits (here in the States), that a sense of community is difficult to achieve—and even more difficult to maintain—that more citizens participating in decision making commonly results in more uniformed decisions, and understanding privacy as a right is, well, almost quaint. Still, justice, access to education, community participation, privacy, and the like hopefully will *remain* touchstones for a liberal democracy (*Reach for the top to gain the middle*—an old Chinese saying, I'm told).

But there's something else, something rarely taken into account in these matters.

Humans were organizing themselves millennia before social, political, and economic theory became difficult subjects for scholars to opine over. These were small communities that melded easily into the landscape among the other creatures, who had their own projects, organized according to their own needs; but over time we humans managed to muscle our way in to their domains with relative impunity—and stunning success. Yet now we are at a watershed moment, and if we continue structuring our societies from the narrowly crafted templates that have rewarded this success, we will not only continue to foul nests great and small but endanger nest-building altogether (remember: planet, space). If we cannot change old habits, and dissuade (replace?) the powers that be, how we organize ourselves will be a moot point. The ideals of

justice, the rights of citizenship, privacy, and community must now, and most seriously, incorporate considerations of the wider environment—and fast. Will this happen? Stay tuned.